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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Gaza Crisis

Key stories in the media:

HaQaretz reported that DM Ehud Barak is promoting a week-long "humanitarian cease-fire" in Gaza. In contrast, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert believes that the military operation still has not achieved its goals. Olmert is reportedly delaying a meeting with senior ministers Tzipi Livni and Barak in an effort to allow the military

operations in Gaza to continue.

All media reported that yesterday the IDF pushed deeper into Gaza City and launched pinpoint raids in the southern Strip. DM Barak announced that Amos Gilad, who heads the Defense Ministry's political-security bureau, would head to Cairo to try to secure a cease-fire that could end Operation Cast Lead. Major media assessed that the fighting could end within a week. HaQaretz reported that Egypt continued yesterday to urge Hamas to accept its cease-fire. Egyptian intelligence chief Omar Suleiman told Hamas representatives that the organization would have to commit to a one-year cease-fire.

Various media cited an Al Jazeera-TV report that Egypt is proposing a 10-year-old hudna (truce). Hamas officials told the Egyptians that it would be willing to accept the proposal if the changes demanded by the organization are made. The Jerusalem Post reported that an Israeli proposal, supported by the IDF, calls for the erection of a barrier surrounding the Egyptian side of Rafah, to be manned by Egyptian soldiers who will not allow weapons smugglers into the town. Maariv reported that the as yet inchoate cease-fire agreement is comprised of four basic phases: 1. A lull in fighting; 2. Satisfactory understandings with Egypt about preventing renewed arms smuggling into the Gaza Strip; 3. An Israeli troop withdrawal from Gaza; 4. Talks about opening the border crossings to and from the Gaza Strip.

Israel Radio reported that at least two Katyusha rockets were fired at Kiryat Shmona (Upper Galilee) from Lebanon this morning.

All media quoted both the State Department and White House spokesmen as saying that PM Ehud Olmert's claim that he had essentially gotten President Bush to pressure Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to abstain on UN Security Council 1860 was simply untrue. HaQaretz and Israel Radio quoted the Prime Minister's Office as saying that the QPM's statements reflect events that happened. Q Makor Rishon-Hatzofe bannered: QOlmert and Livni Leaving Scorched Earth in U.S.

Leading media quoted presumptive Secretary of State Hillary Clinton at her Senate confirmation hearings yesterday as saying that the U.S. must Qactively pursue a strategy of smart power in the Middle East. Q Clinton also said: QThe President-elect and I understand and are deeply sympathetic to Israel's desire to defend itself under the current conditions, and to be free of shelling by Hamas rockets.

However, we have also been reminded of the tragic humanitarian costs of conflict in the Middle East, and pained by the suffering of Palestinian and Israeli civilians. This must only increase our determination to seek a just and lasting peace agreement that brings real security to Israel; normal and positive relations with its neighbors; and independence, economic progress, and security to the Palestinians in their own state. Q Clinton called to engage in Qtough-minded, intelligent diplomacyQ with Iran and for QIran to end its nuclear weapons program and sponsorship of terror,

HaQaretz reported that diplomats have warned Israel that the Gaza operation is causing long-term harm to Israel's image. The Jerusalem Post reported that DM Barak has ordered the IDF to set up a team of intelligence and legal experts that will collect evidence related to IDF operations in Gaza that could be used to defend military commanders against future lawsuits. The Jerusalem Post reported that the Israeli Consulate-General in New York is urging Israelis to upload war footage to the CNN site. The media continued to report on anti-Israel/anti-Semitic attacks around the world. Yediot reported that Norwegian Finance Minister Kristin Halvorsen took part in a rally in which QDeath to the JewsQ was shouted. Yediot and Israel Radio reported that yesterday protesters ransacked the offices of Bicom, the pro-Israeli lobby in London, in front of the staff.

HaQaretz reported that IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi told the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee yesterday that would-be Hamas suicide bombers wearing IDF uniforms attempted to infiltrate a group of IDF soldiers operating in the Gaza Strip during Operation Cast Lead. The newspaper cited the Mizan human rights group in Gaza as saying that a Palestinian doctor in the Gaza refugee camp of Jabalya was killed by IDF fire this week while on his way to remove casualties from a building being targeted by Israeli missiles.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the IDF plans to open more crossing points into Gaza starting on Wednesday, in an effort to vastly increase aid to the civilian population.

HaQaretz, Maariv, and Israel Radio reported that yesterday a settler from Emanuel, who claimed that his car had been pelted with stones, fired in the air. A 14-year-old Palestinian boy was killed in the incident. The radio also reported that in Upper Nazareth, inside Israel, a 14-year-old Jew maimed a Palestinian youth.

HaQaretz said that while Egypt is turning out to be the big regional winner, Turkey has become the big loser.

Makor Rishon-Hatzofe reported that President-elect Obama is initiating the renewal of the alliance between Jews and African-Americans.

Gaza Crisis:

Summary:

Military correspondent Amos Harel and Palestinian affairs correspondent Avi Issacharoff wrote on page one of the independent, left-leaning HaQaretz: Q[Hamas] may prefer to wait for the Obama administration in the hope that the environment may be more conducive to its aims.

Military correspondent Alex Fishman wrote in the lead article of the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: QIsrael is not going to emerge from this round with victory laurels. Its principal achievement will be to have fixed the Qdeterrence digressionQ from 2006 with respect to the Palestinians, the Arab world, and Iran.

Diplomatic correspondent Herb Keinon wrote on page one of the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: QUnlike [Tzipi] Livni, [Ehud Barak] wants to see any arrangement tied to an agreement with Egypt. Livni would also like to see a mechanism to stop the smuggling put into place, but would not make a cease-fire or withdrawal from Gaza dependent on it.

Senior op-ed writer Akiva Eldar commented in Ha'aretz: QThis is the time to show the Israeli voter that there is a reliable Palestinian partner to the division of the territory. Any other outcome to Operation Cast Lead will mean a clear victory to Hamas.

Former Ambassador to the U.S., former Minister of Foreign Affairs, and former Minister of Defense Moshe Arens wrote in Ha'aretz: QThe idea of deterring Hamas is a fantasy. Hamas has to be defeated.

Military correspondent Danny Shalom wrote in the nationalist, Orthodox Makor Rishon-Hatzofe: QA picture of the Hamas leaders ... coming out of their holes and being expelled from Gaza may definitely ... symbolize IsraelQs clear victory.

Block Quotes:

II. "Hamas Is Waiting for Obama"

Military correspondent Amos Harel and Palestinian affairs correspondent Avi Issacharoff wrote on page one of the independent, left-leaning HaQaretz (1/14): QAs expected by many analysts, Hamas offered a less than clear response to the Egyptian cease-fire initiative.... Hamas is mainly concerned about the lack of a timetable in the Egyptian proposal.... Moreover, Hamas is also opposed to the third part of the Egyptian proposal that calls for the resumption of talks with Fatah in an effort to mend the internal rift in the Palestinian camp -Q and the return of Palestinian Authority officials to Gaza.... In Jerusalem there is a growing concern that Hamas may be playing for time -Q six days prior to the swearing in of a new U.S. president, the group may prefer to wait for the Obama administration in the hope that the environment may be more conducive to its aims. The rumors that Hamas is close to throwing in the towel, which began to circulate following the speech by Ismail Haniyeh on Monday, proved to be premature.

II. QRatcheting Up the Pressure

Military correspondent Alex Fishman wrote in the lead article of the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (1/14): QThere's a sense of optimism in the air, the scent of the end. There is something to talk about. The Hamas delegation brought from Damascus to Cairo an answer that will allow for a package of understandings to be formed that will lead to a near end of Operation Cast Lead. The Israeli assessment is that it's a matter of days. Maybe even by the end of the week. And if nothing comes of the talks in Cairo this week? And if Hamas suddenly has second thoughts? The IDF is a very short distance from the heart of Gaza City and has it surrounded from every direction. That ring of suffocation will continue to tighten until they agree.... The positive turn came on Sunday in Cairo in the course of the meeting between representatives of Hamas Damascus and Hamas Gaza.... One mustn't expect a political document, nor does Israel want a political document that has anything to do with Hamas and which would be binding. In any event, Israel neither recognizes nor has any faith in Hamas. What then? The size of the blow that it was dealt, the scope of the destruction and the extent of Hamas-Gaza's distress, as opposed to the IDF's determination, have created a situation in which Hamas is prepared to adhere to a cease-fire. No more shooting out of the Gaza Strip. Israel has already set its price tag for violations. And that is why it has no interest in an orderly agreement; it doesn't want anyone coming along later and telling it what price it can and cannot exact from Hamas for violations of the cease-fire. The tantalizing novelty of the Cairo initiative is that Hamas is prepared to commit to a cease-fire that is unlimited in time.... Israel is not going to emerge from this round with victory laurels. Its principal achievement will be to have fixed the Qdeterrence digressionQ from 2006 with respect to the Palestinians, the Arab world, and Iran. The IDF has restored its self-confidence. The public's faith in the army and the leadership has improved by leaps and bounds. And Hamas -- so everyone hopes -- will think ten times before it decides to launch a terror attack out of the Gaza Strip. Once it sees what Gaza looks like, it is going to have to be crazy to pull the trigger again.

III. "Surrounded by Sharon Advisers, Livni Recycles His Unilateralism"

Diplomatic correspondent Herb Keinon wrote on page one of the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (1/14): QIt should come as no surprise ... that during the infighting among Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Defense Minister Ehud Barak and [Tzipi] Livni as to how to end the fighting in Gaza, Livni has adopted a distinctly Sharon-like unilateralist approach. According to Livni, Israel -- when it feels it has accomplished its military goals (and she has never defined exactly what they would be) -- should simply cease fire, leave Gaza without any agreements, and warn that if the Palestinians dare fire one more rocket on Israel, the IDF would go in with even greater force. Sound familiar? It should. It's the same logic that was behind Sharon's unilateral disengagement from Gaza in 2005.... Unlike Livni, [Ehud Barak] wants to see any arrangement tied to an agreement with Egypt. Livni would also like to see a mechanism to stop the smuggling put into place, but would not make a cease-fire or withdrawal from Gaza dependent on it.

IV. "How to Beat Hamas"

Senior op-ed writer Akiva Eldar commented in Ha'aretz (1/14): QThis is the time to ask Egypt to grant Abbas a central role in the efforts to bring about a cease-fire in Gaza and open the crossings. If Abbas brings the poor residents of Gaza the news of a cease-fire, he will enjoy great support from them. Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, a great supporter (in the past) of unilateralism, should not only tell us whom she is not willing to talk to. The positive half of her statement yesterday, that Qwe are holding a dialogue with the moderates, and using force against the extremists,Q lacks any manifestation. The year of dialogue she has led for a permanent settlement has not moved us an inch toward agreement. This is the time to prove the Palestinian voters that the way of getting Israel out of the territories is not through exchanging fire, which harms civilians, but through exchanges between leaders. This is the time to show the Israeli voter that there is a reliable Palestinian

partner to the division of the territory. Any other outcome to Operation Cast Lead will mean a clear victory to Hamas.

IV. "To Deter or to Defeat"

Former Ambassador to the U.S., former Minister of Foreign Affairs, and former Minister of Defense Moshe Arens wrote in Ha'aretz (1/14): QIt is not only our naove foreign minister, Tzipi Livni, who has announced that in the wake of the Gaza operation, Israel has restored its deterrent capability. Many of IsraelQs politicians are echoing this view.... It does not seem likely that a terrorist organization could be deterred from pursuing its aims.... Hamas, a terrorist organization dedicated to the destruction of Israel, cannot be deterred.... If a cease-fire is established before HamasQs rocket capability has been eliminated, the group will be seen as the victor. The idea of deterring Hamas is a fantasy. Hamas has to be defeated.

VI. QExpel the Hamas Leaders from Gaza

Military correspondent Danny Shalom wrote in the nationalist, Orthodox Makor Rishon-Hatzofe (1/14): QNo one can expect the Hamas leaders to get out of their holes with their hands on their heads.... For some reason, an idea runs in the world that regular armies of countries canQt fight and defeat terrorist organizations. This is very far from reality.... The organization should have been eliminated not only practically but also from the point of view of consciousness. A picture of the Hamas leaders -Q Haniyeh, Zahar, and others -Q coming out of their holes and being expelled from Gaza may definitely fit the Qconsciousness pictureQ of Operation Cast Lead and symbolize IsraelQs clear victory -- unless Israel agrees to leave the organization in the present state and a new Rabin arises, returning those terrorist leaders to Gaza, as happened with Arafat.

CUNNINGHAM